Early access to superannuation used to pay household bills

Media Release

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Source: Household financial resources, September 2020

Most people who accessed their superannuation early due to financial hardship caused by COVID-19, used it to pay their mortgage, rent or other household bills, according to a new report released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

The Household Financial Resources report presents a snapshot of household finances in the months following the introduction of COVID-19 related restrictions.

ABS Director of Household Economic Resource Surveys, Dean Adams, said that of the people who accessed the COVID-19 early release of superannuation scheme by September 2020, 29 per cent mainly used it to pay their mortgage or rent, while 27 per cent used it for household bills. Another 15 per cent used it to pay credit card or personal debts, while around one in eight people (13 per cent) added it to their savings.

"We found that for people who accessed the scheme twice, the average total amount withdrawn was $17,441. The average single withdrawal was $7,728 for the first opportunity, and $7,536 for the second," Mr Adams said.

Average private household income, including earnings from jobs, investments and superannuation remained stable in real terms, at $2,117 per week in September 2020 when compared to 12 months prior.

"Around one in five households (19 per cent) had someone receiving the JobKeeper payment through their employer, or in their own business. Half these households owned their dwelling with a mortgage, while almost half (47 per cent) were couple families with dependent children."

"Average government payments rose by $89 per week per household, compared to the previous September quarter, to $300 per week. Over 1.3 million households contained someone receiving the Coronavirus Supplement of $550 per fortnight."

Media notes

- The COVID-19 early release of superannuation scheme, which allowed up to $10,000 to be accessed before retirement to people suffering financial hardship, could be accessed twice (once before and after June 30, 2020), enabling up to $20,000 of superannuation to be withdrawn.
- JobKeeper payment estimates represent households where it was known to the jobholder that a payment was being made to a person's employer or own business. Throughout the September 2020 quarter, the JobKeeper payment was $1,500 per fortnight.
- When reporting ABS data you must attribute the Australian Bureau of Statistics (or the ABS) as the source.
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